Literacy Drive for Women

†689. SHRIMATI SAVITA SHARDA: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(c) whether it is a fact that presently the illiterate women in the country outnumber the men;

(d) if so, whether Government would propose to introduce any new scheme to literate women; and

(e) if so, by when and if not, in what manner Government propose to make women more and more educated?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT [DR. (SHRIMATI) RITA VERMA]: (a) According to the 2001 census report (Provisional) the absolute number of illiterate women is more than illiterate men, but the following positive trends have also emerged:—

- Reduction in gender gap from 24.84 percentage points in 1991 to 21.69 percentage points in 2001.
- Female literacy has increased by 14.87 percentage points as against an increase of 11.72 percentage points in male literacy during 1991—2001.

(b) and (c) The following steps taken to improve the female literacy in the country:

1. A scheme of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) has been started for Universalization of Elementary Education in a mission mode with district as a focus. SSA provides Elementary Education for all children in the age group of 6—14 by 2010. The goals are as follows:

- All children in school, Education Guarantee Scheme center, Alternate school, 'Back-to-School' camp by 2003.
- All children complete five-year primary schooling by 2007.
- All children complete eight years of schooling by 2010.

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

- Focus on elementary education of satisfactory quality with emphasis on education for life.
- Bridge all gender and social category gaps at primary stage by 2007 and at elementary education level by 2010.
- Universal retention by 2010.

Special efforts are being made for improvement of access, enrolment, retention and achievement of girls in schools under this scheme.

1. National Literacy Mission (NLM) seeks to attain full literacy, *i.e.* sustainable threshold level of 75 per cent by 2005. It seeks to achieve this goal by imparting functional literacy to non-literate in 15—35 year age group. Major thrust of the programme is on promotion of literacy among women. In the literacy programmes, 60% of the learners are women and around 60% of volunteers also are women and young girls.

2. Mahila Samakhya Programme seeks to build up capacities, among groups of women and contribute towards the empowerment of women in rural areas, particularly from socially and economically marginalized groups.

Education for female through Gram Panchayats

690. DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that deep-rooted Socio.-cultural prejudices against education and pre-occupation with household chores are the main hurdles for the education of women and girls in the country; and

(b) if so, whether Government propose to involve Gram Panchayats and religious leaders in spreading education among women and girls?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (DR. (SHRIMATI) RITA VERMA): (a) Many factors affect the education of women and girls in the country. These include socio-cultural and traditional practices